Mastering the Illusion

Della Wren

Table of Contents

..... 1

Mastering the Illusion 3

Pain Creates Pain 4

What's The Point? 4

The Argument with It 4

Recognizing the Pain 5

Challenging Your Perception 5

You're Not a Martyr 6

Martyrdom is Powerlessness 6

Accept the Power You Have 7

What's My Role? 8

Self-Created Pain 9

Leave Other People Alone 9

I Learned This the Hard Way 10

Control is an Illusion 12

This Is Freedom 14

Reflection Questions 16

Taking Action 18

Other Offerings That Might Interest You 22

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Mastering the Illusion

Perception is "a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression." The definition is from the Oxford Dictionary.

Based on that definition, when you look around you at your world you gain a mental impression of it. It's a mental interpretation or understanding of what's happening.

What I've learned over time through my own healing process is that the interpretation of reality gets really screwed up by pain and our interpretations of previous experiences. I often call perception a filter of sorts, because of how warped it can get over time and how much it messes with our ability to be okay in our lives.

Our perception offers us additional pain that our experience doesn't offer us. Yes, as humans we add our own pain into our experiences. This is particularly true when the experience triggers an old wound. A simple example would be a person that has a lack of confidence and then they have an experience where somebody isn't confident in them or something they've done. The experience triggers the wound of lack of self-confidence, making their perception of the experience worse than anything that actually happened in reality.

We often pay no attention to the connection between our experiences and the old wounds that we carry around. Because we don't pay attention to that, our experience continually triggers those old wounds. One of the things our experience is trying to do, is show us what we need to work through by continually triggering the wound.

Now some of this is part of the illusion. Your experience continually triggers the pain point because you have the pain point, not because your experience is intentionally out to get you. Once you heal the pain point, your experience seems to stop offering you that pain. Why? Because you're no longer triggered by those experiences, so even if the experience continues to happen, it doesn't trigger you and therefore it no longer matters.

Sounds a bit like de-sensitization, doesn't it? I suppose that's one way of looking at it, but that offers a bit of pain. What that does is suggest that it's your job to be in pain, that it's your job to react negatively to the things that are going on you, that it's your job to be triggered, or that it's your job to fix the external experience. That isn't true. Your job is not to spend your life being triggered and bothered by your experience, nor is your job to control the experience. Your job is actually to learn to

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how to be okay in the experience without changing the experience, while understanding the power you have to create the reality you want over time. Here's the rub – you can't create the reality you want while you're busy being bothered by or trying to control your current experience.

Pain Creates Pain

When you're triggered by and reacting to your experience all the time, your natural instinct is to remove the trigger by trying to control the experience. There's nothing wrong with that at a basic level, except that it offers you pain. Your solution to the problem is not to heal the trigger within yourself, it is instead to try to change your external experience by trying to take control over it. Let me just say it right here – that doesn't work. I've tried. You will bring the pain with you. Pain will create pain. If you try to run away from pain, it simply follows you around.

What's The Point?

Heal yourself instead of trying to control the experience. By healing I don't mean de-sensitize yourself, I mean heal the trigger or the wound. Heal the lack of confidence so that when people aren't confident in you because of their own pain, you don't internalize that. What it allows you to do is leave the pain other people offer you with them. You don't need to pick it up and you don't need to take it on.

The Argument with It

The argument is an easy one.

"But they shouldn't do that in the first place. They need to change their behavior. I can't let them do that to me or anybody else."

Why is that your job? Why did you take on that role? Why are you sacrificing yourself?

You argue that if you heal yourself so that you're no longer bothered by that other person's behavior, you're allowing the behavior to happen. But you don't have control over the other person. You can't allow anything because they didn't ask you for permission.

"But I can't just stand by and watch."

Again, you don't have control, so you have to continue to let that person do what they do. Unless you're physically breaking up a fight, the behavior of most people is not under your control. It's not something you can change. You have to let it be.

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The idea that you should have to sacrifice yourself as a means of trying to change the behavior of other people is not true. That's not why you're here. That's not the point of the experience. In reality what this does is make you defend the pain and the problem. You decide you need to stay in pain until the external reason for the pain changes. Why? What's the story you're telling?

Recognizing the Pain

You can recognize the pain in other people without needing them to change it for you to be okay. You can see when the other person is projecting pain. You can take some indirect control by how you respond to what's going on.

When you just react, usually all you're doing is throwing your own pain into the mix. Reactions are often unconscious, usually based on pain, and frequently make situations worse instead of better. When you respond you do so consciously, you don't offer your own pain, and you make some indirect attempt at improving the situation, while recognizing that you have no control over the other person.

What healing actually allows you to do is respond instead of react. It offers you the ability to make a conscious choice about how to respond to everything that goes on around you. You're no longer on autopilot, you're no longer triggered, and through simply mastering yourself within the experience, you're indirectly working to create the change you wish to see in the world. Notice that everything is an indirect use of energy. You're not trying to control anything. You're simply managing your own behavior as a means of trying to gain indirect control, while accepting the idea that it may or may not work and that ultimately, you don't have control over what happens next anyway. You accept both your limited power to contain, control, or change the external experience and also your internal power to continually manage yourself within the experience.

Challenging Your Perception

We have a story in society that we like to tell about ourselves within our experience. The story goes something like this:

Our job is to control the experience and each other. Our job is to eradicate everything we don't like from the world, even though we don't agree on what needs to be eradicated or how to eradicate it. Our job is to defend each other from all the bad things that can happen. Our job is to sacrifice ourselves and our own happiness until everybody else is okay too. Anybody that doesn't do these things is selfish, has their head in the sand, and doesn't care about what goes on around them.

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That story, those ideas, are so ingrained in how we're taught to be in the world that we don't even think to question their validity. We don't even think to question whether those things are possible. We don't think to question whether those ideas cause more problems than they solve. We don't think to question our own perception of how we're taught to be in the world and how that perception affects us individually on a day-to-day basis. Those are the things I want you to question!

You're Not a Martyr

Think about the last time you tried to control somebody else's behavior because you didn't like it. If you're a parent, think about the struggle you have to control your own children, never mind the other adults you're surrounded by on a daily basis. It's really hard to do, isn't it? But you continue to try. Why?

The parent-child relationship is quite different from the relationships you have with other adults and is not in the scope of what we're talking about here; it's an entirely different paradigm. But it offers context for how difficult it is for us to control other people, even the little humans that we bring into the world. If it's difficult to control the humans you create, it's going to be virtually impossible to control the humans you didn't create. But we keep trying.

We keep trying because we've been taught that controlling other people is the socially responsible thing to do. This lie is what keeps society stuck in the pain it's in now. This lie keeps us spinning around in pain trying to control each other. It's not working, is it?

Since you're not a martyr you don't have to hang onto this lie. You can free yourself from it by understanding where your power is in your own experience. You see, the problem with making everybody a martyr is that forces everybody to put their power outside of themselves.

Martyrdom is Powerlessness

The societal lie that says that we have to control each other is forced powerlessness. Good or bad, the current government systems are designed to keep people under control. They are designed to create fear of what happens if we allow people to take responsibility for themselves in their own way. There is another lie built into this whole idea that helps to keep the fear going – that self-responsibility equals no help at all from anybody for any reason. It means no lifeboat, no life jacket, and no life support. We create these extremes of all or nothing because it helps to defend the current system.

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The lie forces people into powerlessness. You have to take on powerlessness to live by the lie. You can't retain your power within yourself if you believe in the lie. It forces you into needing to control other people or your external experience in general, and that puts your power outside of you. Suddenly your own ability to be happy is contained in what other people are doing or not doing. That's martyrdom and powerlessness in a nutshell.

Put quite simply – you don't need to live like that. You don't need to subscribe to that sense of martyrdom or powerlessness. You can care without jumping into the pool of pain. You can be compassionate without offering yourself pain. You can recognize your own power within every experience and do the things you can do to make a difference. When you see you don't have power or control, you simply let it be there. It doesn't mean you don't care, you just recognize you're not going to be able to affect change and you accept that.

Accept the Power You Have

You want to control that other person because you see that as the solution to the problem. If that person just changes how they are acting or what they are doing, the problem goes away. While yes, that may be true, spending your time trying to take control of something that isn't yours to control just creates additional pain. Not to mention, it puts your power in the other person's hands.

The key here is to simply understand where your power is and where it clearly isn't. You don't have power over the other person and your work is to acknowledge and accept that. Said more bluntly – deal with it. Then figure out where your power is – inside of you. You can control your own response to what's happening. You can control whether or not you offer your own pain. You can control whether or not you get triggered. You can control everything that is you – thoughts, feelings, and emotions. You can't directly do anything about the other person. You have to let them be.

This is a hard one, isn't it? It's hard to just decide to use the power you have and stop wishing your power was somewhere else. What it creates is a feeling of powerlessness. It makes you feel like you don't have the control or power you need. The only reason you feel like that is because you're wishing your power was somewhere else. Your own innate power isn't good enough because it's not giving you the ability to fix the perceived problem in the other person. The truth is, it's not your job to fix. It's not your job to change. The problem isn't in your power, it's in what you perceive your role to be in that situation.

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What's My Role?

Here's a very hard truth that most people don't like.

Your only role in every situation, no matter what's happening, is to manage yourself.

You have no external control at all. None. The only power you have is over your own response to what's happening. You can't make anybody do anything. You can ask nicely, say pretty please, and if they refuse that's their choice. You can't control that.

Wishing you could is what makes you feel powerless!

Your role is not to stop bad things from happening. Your role is not to prevent the other person from making bad choices. Your role is not to protect anybody or anything from anything or anyone. Your role is not to be a martyr or a sacrificial lamb.

Your role is to simply live your life on your own terms in a way that gives you joy.

That's your role. The only problem you have is that society has taught you something different. Society has taught you that if you're not busy interfering with everything and everyone around you you're doing something wrong, or you don't care enough, or you're selfish. Those things aren't true.

You can be compassionate and care from the sidelines. Be an armchair quarterback and stop trying to rush the field. Your role in life is not what society has told you it is. There's a very simple untruth which is that caring means actively redirecting people, stopping people, chasing people down, interfering with, messing with, and otherwise worrying about what other people are doing. This lie is what upsets you. This lie is what makes you feel powerless. This lie puts your power outside of you and makes other people responsible for how you feel because if they don't do it your way, whatever that is, you're upset. Why are you upset? Because you were taught that caring about them means trying to get them to do it or see it your way.

Caring means you convince them that you're right and they are wrong. Caring means you argue with them about what you think they should be doing. Caring means you fight to control them.

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Self-Created Pain

It's all self-created pain. If you just kept to your armchair quarterback role and simply watched from the sidelines, what they were doing may still upset you, but you won't be adding your own pain. You add your own pain when you fight for control. You add your own pain when you rush the field. You jeopardize your relationship with them when you rush the field. You might get evicted from the game. You might never be allowed back. All because you wanted control, and you were bound and determined to take it.

Then the crazy part of this story is that you victimize yourself with it. There's that powerlessness again. You make yourself a victim of their behavior and then get mad when they don't change it at your demand. So now it's their fault that you got evicted from the game. It's their fault you were banned. They messed up your experience.

You're angry because they didn't say "how high?" when you demanded they change their behavior to make you feel better. It makes you feel powerless and so you spin the story to make yourself a victim of them instead. What you don't see is that you created the whole thing for yourself. The story you're telling is that if they hadn't acted like that, you wouldn't have had to rush the field. That lie is what keeps you in pain. It wasn't your job to manage their behavior in the first place. It's not your job to demand they change anything. If you'd simply stop trying to manage other people, it would give you your power back. You would no longer have to feel powerless.

The lie says that you can't care from your armchair. I'm here to tell you that it's not true. You can care deeply from that chair and never ever rush the field again. The simplest way I can think of to take your power back is to learn how to care and be deeply compassionate from the comfort of your armchair.

Leave Other People Alone

We need to stop telling the lie that says control equals caring. What we need to learn is how to leave each other alone. We need to learn how to stay on the sidelines more so that we can understand where our power is in every situation.

Your power is not out there. Your power is not in your ability to demand change from other people. Your power is within you. Your power has nothing to do with anybody else. Your power is over your own thoughts, and feelings, and behavior. Your power does not extend to anybody else's thoughts, feelings, or behavior. You are never powerless. You just don't have control over the thing you want control over. That causes you more pain than anything that's happening.

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When you understand where your power is in every situation and you stop trying to take control over things that aren't yours, you stop feeling powerless. It gives you your power back. It allows you to manage your own response to what's happening and make conscious choices.

You may have some indirect control, but if you're just busy demanding everybody else change their behavior, you won't see that. That's what causes you to offer your own pain, get triggered, victimize yourself, make up stories that aren't true, and add pain to your experience that wasn't there before.

"If the other person was acting differently, I wouldn't have had to do that." You blame another person for your behavior. Why? You make yourself a victim of what they are doing to justify your behavior so that you can blame them for it. Why? Why are you not able to take responsibility for your own behavior?

You hang onto this perception that you're supposed to have control. You hang onto the idea of wishing you had control over the thing you don't have control over. It causes you to blame others for your behavior and then justify it by making yourself a victim of whatever they did, even if that thing wasn't directed at you.

You've created all your own pain but continue to blame the external world for it. The truth is that it's all in your perception. It's all in how you see it. It's got nothing to do with other people or what's going on around you. It's all in your head. It's all a story that you tell, probably because you were taught that this is how you're supposed to be, that this is what caring looks like.

The whole thing makes you feel completely powerless in your own life.

I Learned This the Hard Way

My own misinterpretation of what other people were telling me or how those people were treating me, caused me to self-create powerlessness and pain. My powerlessness was so extreme that I stopped making choices for myself. I stopped living my own life. I was the poster child for people-pleasers. I would get angry, act out, and do what they wanted anyway for fear that they wouldn't love me if I didn't.

Everything I did until somewhere around my 40th birthday was based on what other people wanted. When my mother looked at me one day when I was about 33 years old and said I was getting too old and it was time to get married, I just married the guy I was dating at the time. He offered. I accepted. From my perception, she took the choice away from me. She told me what to do. To make her happy, I married my now husband. That was 15 years ago.

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When I told her I was marrying my now husband, she said "I didn't mean you had to do it that fast." In her eyes, I had to get married by the time was 34 or so because once I hit 35, I was too old to have more children and by 40, I was washed up and nobody would want me. Those are ideas from her generation that aren't true now. She passed them on and because I was such a people-pleaser, I followed them. I created my own pain.

Now, who thinks she shouldn't have said that stuff? Who wants to blame her for what I did? Do you see the problem with that? I made my own choice. It was triggered. It was based on my incorrect perception of what she was saying. It was based on me taking on her pain and the ideas that were passed around in her generation. But she didn't actually tell me what to do. She didn't hold me down and make me do anything.

The perception that she should keep her mouth shut takes my power away from me. It makes her responsible for how I feel and what I do. That isn't true. I still had the ability to make my own choice. The fact that I chose not to is not her fault. That's on me.

You argue that she indirectly affected my choices, and she did. That's the point of indirect control though. You all have indirect control in exactly the same way. But then you say that she needed to take more responsibility for that because she should have known that I would react that way. It's not her job to figure out how I'm going to react to what she's saying. It's not your job to figure out how other people are going to react to you either.

Your job is to do the best you can to manage yourself and then let go of trying to control how other people react to you. You can only do what you can do and that means accepting that you might get a reaction you didn't intend to get. You may also get exactly what you wanted.

The point of recognizing that your power is always within you is what offers you indirect control. Most people don't realize that and so when they say things, they may or may not intend for other people to react or respond the way they do. My mother didn't mean marry the first guy that shows up and the fact that I took it that way isn't her responsibility regardless of what she said or didn't say.

For as long as I continued to blame the people around me for making me live my life a certain way, I would stay powerless and miserable. That's exactly what happened. Using the perspective that you're using to argue with me is what kept me in pain. That's what caused the problem because I kept waiting for other people to

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change and they never did. I kept waiting for other people to stop telling me what to do and they never did. I kept waiting for other people to fix it and they never did. I kept waiting to be happy and I never was.

The moment I gained intuitive clarity that it was my perception that was the problem, was a life-changing moment for me. It was quite literally a "holy shit moment" that I will probably never forget. That moment undid years and years of pain in a single heartbeat. Suddenly I realized that the people around me were just trying to offer me guidance or advice. They weren't telling me what to do. I had used my own power against me. I victimized myself for no reason. I created my own pain for no reason. I created my life the way I did for no reason other than I thought I had to. In a single moment, I let everyone around me off the hook. I forgave them all. I released the pain.

Suddenly I understood where my power was. Suddenly I understood that my mind had been making up a story to try to protect me. The story was that I wasn't good enough and that I wasn't allowed to be confident in myself and make my own choices. I used that story to sabotage myself over and over and over again, long after that moment came and went.

Control is an Illusion

When I log into my banking app on my phone and I choose to pay a bill, I have control over selecting which bill to pay and how much. I may also be able to control whether the payment is recurring or how often I pay the bill. Those are the things I have control over.

I don't have control over whether the bank gets it right. I don't have control over how long it takes the bank to send the money. I don't have control over how long it takes the company I'm paying to process the payment. There are a lot of things I don't have control over when I pay a bill.

Even if I go to the company themselves to pay the bill, I still don't have complete control. I can't control whether it gets credited to the right account or not. I can't control what the person on the other side of the counter does. I have to trust that person to do their job to the best of their ability. My control is very limited.

These simple day-to-day things that we all do are prime examples of our limited control in every situation. There are dozens and dozens of these types of things in our daily lives.

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Do you remember doing school projects with other students? Some would do their fair share and others wouldn't do a thing. Maybe you're the one that felt like you had to be responsible for the whole project because otherwise it wouldn't get done. This scenario starts the power struggle early. Many of us, me included, learn very quickly that if we want it done a certain way, we have to do it ourselves.

What did you learn? You learned that your point of control was in not letting anybody else have control. You learned independence in a dysfunctional, triggered kind of a way. Your power was within you and recognized that. But then you also learned that other people were flaky. You learned to not trust other people. You learned to not depend on anybody else.

If you were lucky, you found teachers that were able to mitigate some of that. They recognized the problem with group work. They created roles and didn't penalize students for what other students were doing or not doing. They created individuality in groups by not making people responsible for each other. This allowed everyone to retain their own sense of power and not learn the triggered lessons that some of us learned.

What was the triggered lesson? That you had to take somebody else's away if what they were doing was going to create a problem for you. You learned self-defense. Here's the thing with those group projects – the students you did the work for didn't want their power in that situation. They didn't want control. They handed it to you willingly. That's the part that gets missed in your perception of those experiences. So then later on, you start trying to take everybody's power away when you think they will create a problem for you. That's where you get into trouble. That hostile takeover is the problem. It doesn't work.

Let people create problems for you and trust yourself to handle those problems. That will allow you to maintain your power without needing to control anything or anyone. Stop trying to manage your experience by taking control of other people. The need to defend yourself is what makes you do that. If you simply recognized the power you had and trusted yourself, you wouldn't need to defend yourself and it would be a less painful experience.

The pain is self-created when you defend yourself. Often the pain of trying to control somebody else is far worse than any problem they may create for you. But you think you need to defend yourself and you think you need to control your experience. Both make you do things as a means of control.

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The control is an illusion. To defend yourself you try to control the other person. That makes them lash out. More pain has now been created. Now you lash out. Again, more pain. Back and forth that goes and nobody wins. Maybe the relationship ends. Maybe you don't talk to each other for weeks. Maybe you just hold a grudge for a few years. Whatever happens, it doesn't go the way you want it to and lots of pain was created. What would happen if you just let the person create the problem for you? Would it have created all that pain? Your mind will tell you that it would, but is that true? Could you have handled the problem?

The truth is that you can handle the problem much more easily than you can control other people. Obviously if you have a choice you take it. But when making a choice means trying to control somebody else, that's not going to work anymore. Your point of power may in fact be in the future. It may be in the next choice that you to hang out with that person or not, to do that thing or not, to go to that business or not.

Learn to recognize when you don't have control of the present moment so that you can just allow that moment to happen without engaging in an argument. When you see that happening, also recognize that your point of control will be in the future where you will determine what to do with that relationship.

Just because you don't have control right then and there, doesn't mean you will never have control again. It just means you have to wait to use your power. The ball will eventually end up in your court and when it does, then you can determine what to do with it. Until then, you have to let the experience play out the way it is going to.

That's hard. We don't like those choices, but this is how we find our point of power. This is how we stop engaging in the argument. This is how we stop defending ourselves. This is actually how we offer ourselves boundaries without ever needing to enforce them. At no point are we ever making anybody do anything. Everybody gets to make their own choices and we simply accept that we can handle what happens next every single time.

This Is Freedom

And it allows you to Master the Illusion. You're never without your power. You see individual situations as exactly that – individual situations. They come and go, but always you will have a choice somewhere along the way. It may not be the choice you want and it may not be when you want to make it, but you will get to make a choice.

There is so much freedom in just letting other people do what they do because it allows you to just manage yourself and not worry about anything else. You start to see

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the cycles and patterns in other people's behavior. You start to see how they create their own pain. You start to see how to use your power more effectively and indirectly.

The freedom that comes from understanding how to use your power in your own life gives you space to heal. The wounds and triggers go away because you realize you don't need them. They aren't helping you. They just make your experience harder. They don't offer any new information anymore. They tell the same old story.

Seeing things clearly frees you from your own pain. My pain shifted massively the minute I realized it was my own perception that was warped. I was able to let everybody off the hook. I was able to free myself from my own self-created chains.

The truth is – you can do the same thing! You have the same power to shift your perception and free yourself.

How will you know you've got it right?

The truth is NOT painful.

That's how you'll know. You'll free yourself from the pain and that will mean that your perception is clear. It's life-changing when it happens.

Below, there are some thought-provoking questions for you to think about, journal about, and reflect on. Consider how these concepts show up for you and whether you want to, need to, or are ready to shift them to make your own healing easier.

I've left you plenty of room to write if you wish to print the booklet. Otherwise grab your own journal or a computer and see where you end up.

Let me know if you have questions on Ko-Fi. I'm happy to answer them.

Love to all.

Della

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Reflection Questions

What stuck out to you?

What did you argue with? What caused you the most trouble?

What did you argue with? What caused you the most trouble?

Why do you think it caused you so much trouble?

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What are you afraid of changing and why?

What are the "what if" questions you're asking yourself?

What are the "what if" questions you're asking yourself?

Are you buying into those "what if" questions? Why or why not?

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Taking Action

To actively change your thinking, you have to understand why the thoughts are showing up. Often the thoughts are connected to an old, unrelated wound we're carrying around. Pick a recurring thought and challenge it. Where is it coming from? What is it connected to? Can you rationalize your way out of it?

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Pick a situation that came to mind while you were reading this booklet. Why does it make you feel powerless? What do you wish you had control over that you do not? Challenge yourself to find your point of power in this scenario and understand how to use it.

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Pick a spot in your life where you put your energy into controlling somebody else. Consider what this is doing to your relationship with that person. Is it helping your relationship? Then consider how you can release control by figuring out why you feel the need to maintain a sense of control. What are you afraid will happen? What are you trying to prevent or change? Is it your job to do that? If it's not your job, the next step it to understand where you have indirect control and figure out how to use that. Remember that indirect control is taken through how you respond to people. How could you respond differently and maybe affect some change?

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Find a spot in your life where you are creating your own pain. What behavior needs to change so that you can stop sabotaging yourself? How can you change it? What's stopping you from changing it? Question the story that comes up. Is it true?

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Other Offerings That Might Interest You

Blog: Uncovering Your Reality

Podcast: Master Your Being

Sessions and Packages: Work with Me Privately

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